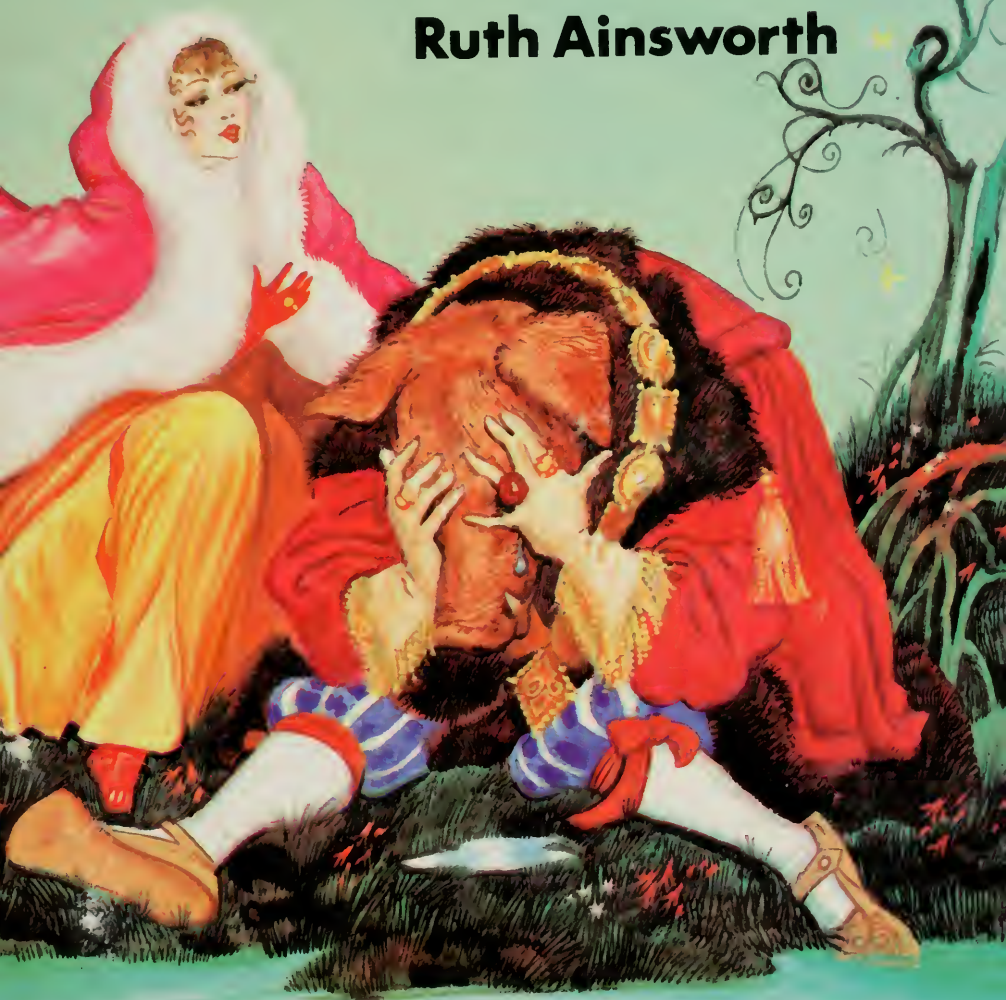


Beauty and the Beast

Ruth Ainsworth



Banner Press



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There was once a merchant who lived in the East. He was very rich and had a fine house and garden. But dearer to him than his riches were his three daughters. They were lovely girls, especially the youngest, whom everyone called 'Little Beauty'.

Unfortunately the merchant met with bad luck and lost his money, and his family had to move to a poor little house. The older girls grumbled at this, but Beauty was as



happy in poverty as she had been in prosperity.

One day, the merchant heard that one of his ships was on its way home, and he must travel to a distant port to meet it. "What presents shall I bring you home?" he asked



his daughters. The oldest daughter asked for jewels. The second daughter asked for rich clothes. The youngest, Beauty, did not ask for anything but to have her father safely home. Then she thought he looked disappointed, so she added: "I should like a red rose better than anything else."

But the ship was wrecked before it reached land, and the merchant was very sad. On his way home, he met with a







strange adventure. It was nightfall, and he found himself in a dense, dark forest. By now the snow was falling, and he could hear the howling of hungry wolves. Just when he had given himself up for lost, he saw a light glimmering a long way off. He rode through an avenue of trees, and at the



end was a lamp, set over the entrance to a vast palace. Above the iron gates was written:

WELCOME, WEARY TRAVELLER

The gates opened of their own accord, and the merchant rode into a large stable-yard. It was quite empty. He put his horse in a

stable, watered and fed it, and then went to look for the owner of this marvellous place. He wandered through many large rooms, all empty, till he came to one with a fire burning and a table set for one.

The merchant sat down and ate a hearty meal. Then he went upstairs to the bedrooms, and, choosing a bed, he fell asleep.

The next morning, he was amazed to see that his crumpled suit had been taken away, and a fresh, clean one put in its



place. He dressed and went downstairs, where he found breakfast prepared. After eating, he went into the garden and, seeing a red rose bush in full bloom, he picked a spray. At once came a frightful roar, and a





heavy hand was laid on his shoulder. He looked up and saw a monster with a beast's head and the body of a man, but covered with fur.

"I have been kind to you," said the Beast, "and you have repaid my kindness by steal-

ing my roses. Prepare to die!"

The merchant explained that he was no thief and had only taken a rose to give to his youngest daughter, and he begged the Beast to be kind and to spare his life.

"Very well," said the Beast, "but within three months you must either come back yourself, or send one of your daughters in your place. Now go back to the room where



you slept, and fill a chest with the jewels and fine robes you will find there."

The terrified merchant did as he was bid, and hurried from the palace, the rose still clasped in his hand. When he arrived home he told his family the story.

"I will go back in your place, Father,"

said Beauty, and no one could make her change her mind. Remembering the kind, generous side of the Beast's nature, her father hoped he might spare her life.

Beauty rode off to the Beast's palace, and the horse went at once to its stable, while Beauty wandered through the grand rooms. Finding a table laid for supper, she sat



down and tried to eat, but her hands shook with terror. Then heavy steps sounded and the Beast appeared, far uglier than Beauty had imagined, with two dreadful, long, curved teeth.

"Have you come here of your own free will?" he asked gruffly.

"Yes," said Beauty.

"You are a good girl. I am grateful to



you,” replied the Beast.

Beauty found a bedroom with the words ‘BEAUTY’S ROOM’ written on the door. Inside were books and pictures and many things to amuse her. Every evening the Beast came to visit her while she ate her supper.

He had attractive manners and could talk well on any subject. Every evening he

asked Beauty the same question:

"Will you marry me?"

And every evening she answered gently:

"No, Beast."

Beauty grew so homesick that the Beast allowed her to go home. He gave her a ring and said:

"Lay this on your dressing-table when you want to come back.

Do not stay away





from me for too long, I pray.”

Once at home, the days flew by, and Beauty almost forgot about the poor, lonely Beast. Then, one night, three weeks later, she remembered, and laid the ring on her dressing-table. Next day she woke up in the Beast’s palace. But where was the Beast? Beauty searched everywhere. At last she found him in the garden, lying by the

fountain as if he were dead.

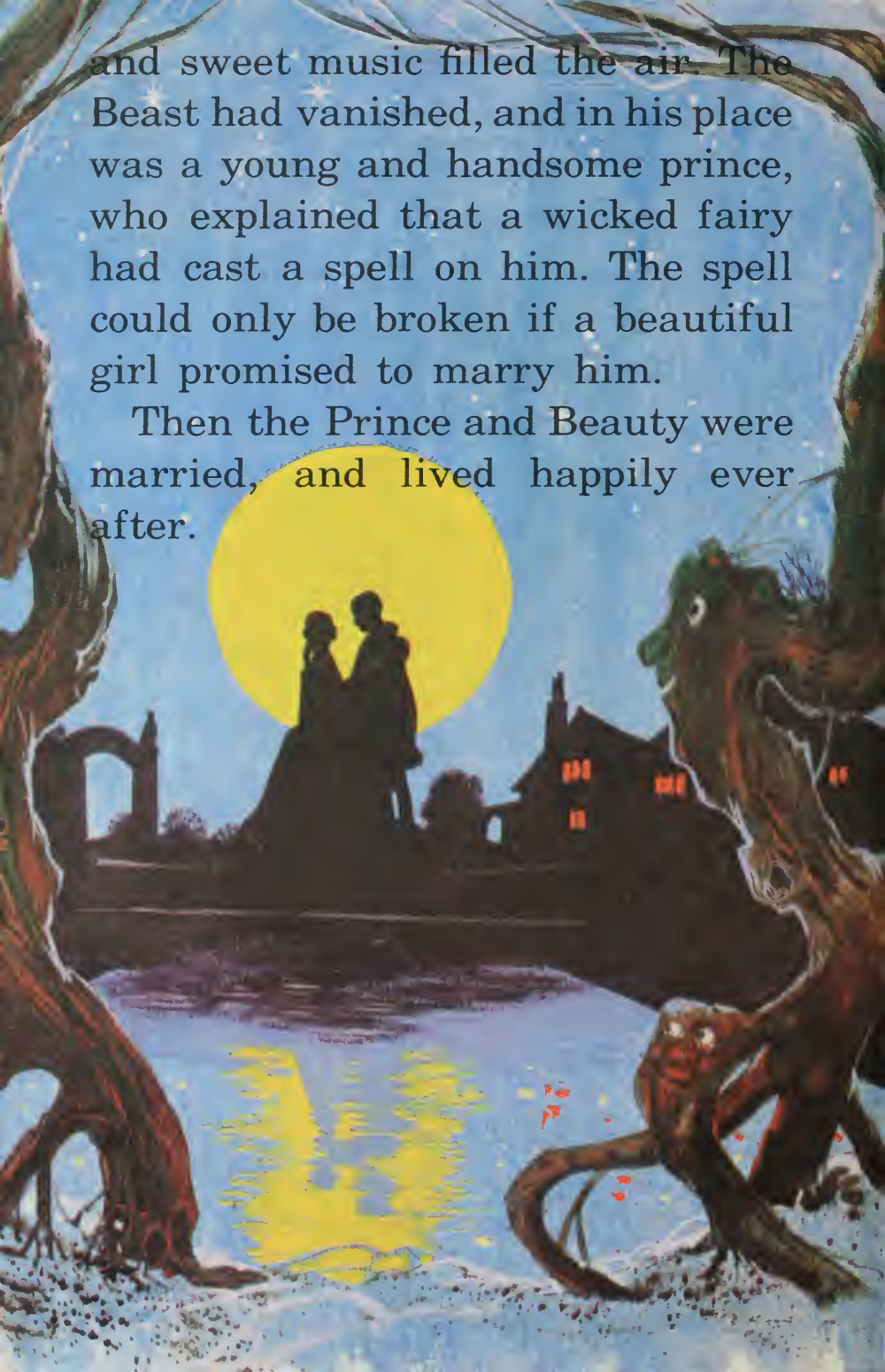
"Do not die!" cried Beauty. "You have been so kind to me, I will be your wife," and she flung her arms round his neck.

A great crack was heard, lights shone



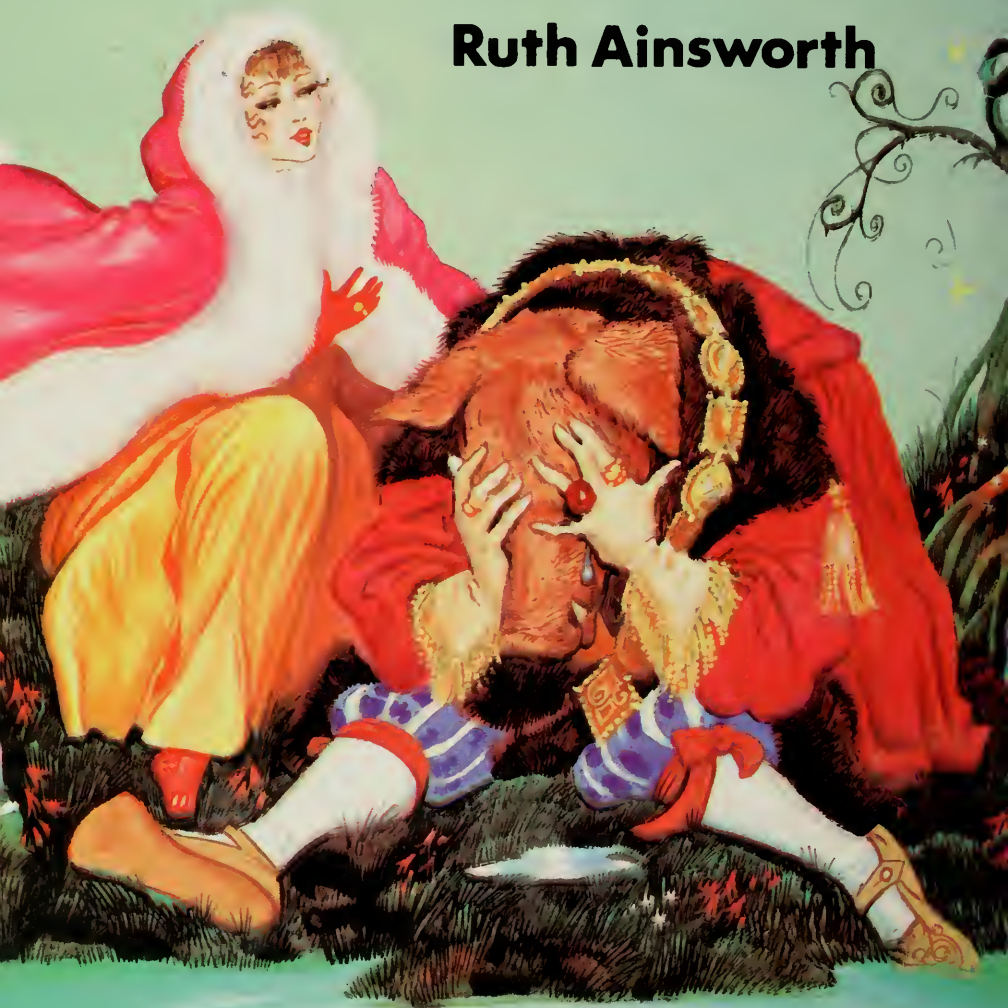
and sweet music filled the air. The Beast had vanished, and in his place was a young and handsome prince, who explained that a wicked fairy had cast a spell on him. The spell could only be broken if a beautiful girl promised to marry him.

Then the Prince and Beauty were married, and lived happily ever after.



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